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Milwaukee's Early Days.

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A POEM.

Buck

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AN HISTORICAL POEM.

MILWAUKEE'S
EARLY DAYS.

BY JAMES S. BUCK.

READ BEFORE THE OLD SETTLERS' CLUB, JANUARY 5TH, 1874,
AND RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO DR. L. A. LAPHAM,
PRESIDENT, AND OTHER OFFICERS AND
MEMBERS OF THE CLUB.

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*We knew each other in our youth,
We know each other still,
We meet as brothers when we meet,
Yes, and we always will.*

J. S. B.

Milwaukee's Early Days.

AN HISTORICAL POEM.

Written by James S. Buck, and read before the Old Settlers' Club, at
their annual meeting in January, 1874.

I.

There's a land in the West that is fair and bright
That abounds in clear lakes all sparkling with light,
Whose forests are filled with the grand old pines,
And the wealth of an Empire concealed in her mines,

Wisconsin ! none can thee excel.

The Queen of the West, this fair young bride
Sits on old Michigan's Western side,

And whose future no man can foretell.

II.

Now in this fair State, our joy and our pride,
There stands a young City, both large and wide ;
Of her will I speak, "Milwaukee" the fair,
And of some of the men who placed her where

She stands, in her pride and beauty.
Who came here in their youth and prime
The landmarks of that early time,
And true to every duty.

III.

Surely we'll ne'er forget the time,
 In thirty-seven, eight and nine,
 When first we saw Milwaukee Bay,
 From off the steamer, that wended its way
 To this far off land of the "Nitch'ee."
 Eager were we to grapple our fate,
 As we came from almost every State,
 To found this queenly city.

IV.

Wild was the scene that met the eye,
 And naught could be heard from the shore near by,
 But the voice of the ducks that covered the marsh,
 As they called to each other, in tones so harsh,
 While getting their food from the sedges.
 And the sound of the waves, on the lonely shore
 Were echoed back with a constant roar,
 As they broke on its sandy ledges.

V.

No house of brick, or stone, or frame,
 Was found by those men when first they came,
 Or any clean, suitable place to stay,
 When weary and tired at the close of the day,
 They would fain find rest from their labors.
 No Newhall House, with its parlors so grand,
 But the Indian wigwams covered the land,
 And the Indian had they for a neighbor.

VI.

Did I say there were none? Ah, yes! there was one
 That was built by good Solomon Juneau, the son
 Of that fair sunny land, called La Belle France,
 Whose citizens always have led the advance
 In all of these wilderness places.
 Who traveled this wild forest country all o'er,
 And some lost their lives while hunting for more,
 The most daring, of all the pale faces.

VII.

This palace of logs was a store and a fort,
 Though surrounded by neither a ditch or a moat,
 For often this lonely and primitive place,
 Was sorely beset by that bloodthirsty race
 With whom Juneau had mercantile dealings.
 Of him they bought goods, to him they sold pelts,
 And once every year they would buy *something else*,
 Which they drank to increase their good feelings.

VIII.

Juneau, so fair, and whose wit was so keen,
 Came here in the year eighteen hundred eighteen,
 An Indian trader of fame and renown,
 Lived on the East side—called Juneau's town—
 And in fact was the king of the place.
 So manly and bold, with a dark hazel eye,
 Always told you the truth and never a lie,
 This pioneer man of his race.

IX.

The first of our Club to reach this new place,
 Were the two brothers Brown and two brothers Chase.
 The Chase brothers went for the Kinnickinnick,
 And Horace has once been our mayor, I think,
 And the first o'er this Club to preside.
 While the Browns to the north and west made their way,
 Up over the hills that o'erlook the Bay,
 And where Samuel still doth reside.

X.

Kilbourn and Walker, two men of renown,
 Were the next to take stock in this fast rising town:
 Kilbourn the fair, with a forehead so high,
 Walker the round, with his clear laughing eye,
 And both of them learned and witty.
 Walker the South side took for his stand,
 Kilbourn the West side went for his land,
 And each commenced a city.

XI.

Kilbourn! the sound of that magical name,
 Awakens old memories, opens old veins;
 A man of large brain and *great power* of will,
 Who kept things moving, ne'er let them stand still,
 And vast were the works that he planned.
 With the eye of a seer he looked far away
 And told us the best place our railroads to lay,
 That to-day extend over the land

XII.

Walker! thy name, too, with Kilbourn's shall stand,
 As one of the fathers, in this goodly land
 Where you took so early and active a part,
 Which gave to this City her first grand start,
 And watched o'er her infantile years.
 Who was so well known all over the West,
 As one of Milwaukee's earliest, and best,
 And a leader among her peers.

XIII.

The next on the list, as our history tells,
 Was that man of large wealth, our own Daniel Wells,
 Who came from old Maine, far away down East,
 And the first man commissioned as Justice of Peace,
 In this then not extensive new place.
 Long may his name be known in the land,
 Where he took such an early and dignified stand,
 As one of the best of our race.

XIV.

Jacob and James Rogers, both men of strong will,
 And Hiram J. Ross who built the first mill,
 Came next, with James Murray, then just in his prime,
 Who was the first painter in that early time,
 And was always o'erflowing with mirth.
 These men all stood high in that first early band,
 Who came in those days to this far off land,
 As men of great merit and worth.

XV.

The Fowlers come next, the Hawleys and Breed,
 Fowler, the first that recorded our deeds;
 Hawley, named Cyrus, was first Clerk of Court,
 While Breed had a store and sold whisky and pork,
 And gathered in money "galore."
 These were all men of fame and renown.
 And played well their part in this embryo town,
 On old Michigan's wild, western shore.

XVI.

Then came D. H. Richards, so full of good deeds,
 And so quick to perceive that the people had need
 Of something to tell them the news of the day,
 To lighten their burdens and show them the way,
 To provide for life's Autumn and Winter.
 So he started a paper, the first in the place,
 That was up and awake to the wants of the race,
 And thus he became the first printer.

XVII.

Pettibone, Aldrich, Wilcox and West,
 And the Edgerton brothers all rank with the best
 Ones that came to this place with that first early band,
 In the search for new homes in this far off land
 That's so fair and so rich in its findings.
 Aldrich supplied all the people with meats;
 West and Ben Edgerton laid out the streets,
 That to-day have some curious windings.

XVIII.

The Douismans, Castleman, Ogden and Sweet,
 And that early surveyor, good Garret Vliet,
 The Sivyer brothers first stopped at Oak Creek,
 Are the men it is said who laid the first brick,
 And must sure have a place in this poem.
 With Douglas, the Smiths, and the two brothers Child,
 Who kept the first tavern, I close thirty-five,
 After putting in Richard G. Owen.

XIX.

The first in the year Thirty-six, as I'm told,
 Was the veteran Crawford, a mariner bold,
 Who commanded a steamer, called the Detroit,
 That ran between here and Chicago—in short—

The first boat we could call our own.
 He has filled many places of trust, in the land,
 Has a kindly, warm heart, and a generous hand,
 And's respected wherever he's known.

XX.

Among the first merchants to gather much "siller,"
 Were the two Pixleys, brothers, Wm. Brown and H. Miller,
 Each firm had a store that was full and complete,
 Both stood on the west side of East Water Street,

And the largest there were in the town.
 Brown and M. Pixley have gone to their rest,
 But Miller still lives in that far off West,
 As a banker of fame and renown.

XXI.

Then Dr. L. Lapham, a man of much fame,
 And William A. Prentiss, a lawyer, next came;
 Learned Lapham, who gives us the names of the flowers,
 And likewise the depth of the yearly rain showers,

And who made the first map of the City.
 While Prentiss has led in our public affairs,
 And once has sat in the Mayorial Chair—
 The best man we e'er had on committee.

XXII.

Tweedy and Crocker, shrewd men of much fame,
 Helped wean this young State and give her a name.
 And in her first Councils they both had a part,
 Likewise did they give to her railroads their start—

Those veins through which course all her trade.
 In our city affairs are they both well known,
 And Hans as mayor once sat on the throne,
 And a clever old monarch he made.

XXIII.

You have often, no doubt, heard the minister say
 That a man needs to watch, as well as to pray,
 And if he his head above water would keep,
 To stay near the shore, ne'er go where it's deep
 And thereby his usefulness shorten.
 Noonan has once been a man of great weight,
 An would even now be a power in the State,
 Had he never crossed blades with John Orton.

XXIV.

Eliphalet Cramer, Wardner, and Hatch,
 Cary and Williams—that's not a bad match—
 Blossom so smiling, and Bowman so keen,
 Furlong, who came from the island so green.
 Are the last of this year to get pictures.
 So, with Belangee and Curtis, full of their tricks,
 William S. Trowbridge and L. W. Weeks
 I will close out the old Thirty-sixers.

XXV. •

The number of men that attained to much fame,
 Who came in the year 'Thirty-seven, look tame
 Compared with the number who came to the place,
 And entered their names for a chance in the race
 After honor, as well as for wealth.
 The Merrills and Porters have got their full share,
 While many have nothing but trouble and care;
 The truth is, I came then, myself.

XXVI.

First, Matthew Keenan, what a musical name,
 Put in an appearance and set up his claim,
 And straight for the foot of fame's ladder he went,
 Fixed his eye on the top and commenced the ascent,
 Determined that place to attain.
 Many places of trust he's filled in the land,
 Looks you straight in the eye when giving his hand,
 And his record is free from all stain.

XXVII.

The next after fame, in this veteran band,
Was ex-mayor Don Upham so child-like and bland,
Who a Governor bold once thought to be made,
Got everything ready, had all the pipes laid.

And entered his name for the race.
But when near the goal his steed flew the track,
For Leonard J. Farwell had turned up a Jack,
And counted him out of his place.

XXVIII.

At the head of the column for the year Thirty-eight,
Stood our veteran Judge, from the Keystone State,
With full bodily strength and a head always clear,
Unbiased by favors and unmoved by fears,

And as firm and erect as a pillar.
High up in the record of fame does he stand,
With a name that's untarnished all over the land,
Our much honored Andrew G. Miller.

XXIX.

The next on the list for the year Thirty-eight,
Is our good-natured mayor, called Harry the great;
A man of strong will and good business tact,
And had he the power no doubt would enact

Some suitable laws for this place.
These old city drones would then work or get stung,
And not let their bills in committee get hung,
As is now too often the case.

XXX.

Shepardson, Quiner, Edwards and Lane,
Graham and Ordway, two lawyers of fame.
The Ward brothers, Joseph and Lindsey, I mean,
All men of good judgment, active and keen,

Came here in this year. Thirty-eight.
There may have been others, if so they're gone;
So with one verse more I will hurry along,
And not keep you here very late.

XXXI.

Our uncle Rufe Cheeney that every one knows,
 Who always has friends but not many foes,
 He went to the war and paid out the gold,
 Is fond of a joke—but I think he's been sold

With his stock in the Monitor mine.
 With him and the Waits, and the two brothers Rice,
 I can close up the year Thirty-eight, very nice,
 And go on to the year Thirty-nine.

XXXII.

In the year Thirty-nine there came to this State,
 From the land of "old Scotia," Alexander the Great,
 With David, who came at the self-same hour,
 Who always has been Alexander's right bower,

And for both getting wealth is a pleasure.
 Alexander supplied this new country with gold,
 And tho' many have tried it, they ne'er have him sold,
 Or defrauded of very much treasure.

XXXIII.

'There's one more of this club whom you know, I ween,
 Whose tall stately form you so often have seen,
 A man of much learning, great medical skill,
 Can cut off your leg or dose you with pills,

And in hunting takes so much delight.
 As a surgeon he ranks every one in the State,
 As a horseman we ne'er yet have seen his mate,
 And is always so kind and polite.

XXXIV.

The last, except one, of this club I will name,
 Is Edward D. Holton, not unknown to fame,
 Who came from New Hampshire, the "old granite state,"
 Whose sons are up early, and never are late.

Some of whom are both learned and witty.
 For temperance he's strong, therefore has he health,
 Has made a good fight and gathered much wealth,
 No better man dwells in the City.

XXXV.

Behold! here cometh a man foreign born,
 That windy old Prussian, F. W. Horn,
 The sage of Mequon, that Teuton stronghold,
 Where Sunday the people play ten pins, I'm told,
 And sometimes engage in a race.
 Fred's furnished our State Legislature with gas,
 When *he* goes for a bill its sure to be passed,
 In fact he's the wit of the place.

XXXVI.

I must not pass over that man of large wealth,
 That's appointed to keep our good city in health,
 Who keeps so strict watch lest the people be ill,
 And has so much trouble with each little bill.
 That he's forced to give up this nice place.
 Few men of his age are as active as he;
 Is a true born son of the "gem of the sea,"
 And one of the best of the race.

XXXVII.

Nor must I o'erlook "Charley Larkin," oh, no!
 Who to Madison always is wanting to go,
 Whose head has grown gray in political wiles,
 Who, when he wants votes, has a face full of smiles,
 And when he gets whipped feels so sadly.
 A sly old coon Charley thinks he can be,
 But few men are beaten so easy as he,
 Which has often been done, and badly.

XXXVIII.

There's another I'll trim while I feel in the mood,
 That staunch old Republican, Sidney L. Rood,
 Who once near went under, it was a close rub,
 When as president bold of the late Greeley Club,
 He sought for both fun and position.
 Who in mischief can beat any man in the State,
 Even Andrew E. Elmore would hang up the slate,
 If the "Cid" was in healthy condition.

XXXIX.

Another old settler who's made no small stir,
 Came here from old Maine, we call him Ab-ner,

Not the kind of a man that is quite safe to kick,
 If you try that on you'll find he's a brick,
 And one that has muscle to spare.
 •A man we all like, has good business tact,
 If beat in a trade will never "gig-back."
 But settles all up on the square.

XI.

Now these first early men were the sons of toil,
 And quickly before them the forest did fall,
 As through its thick meshes they opened their way,
 To the goodly lands that beyond it did lay,
 Those prairies so old and so hoary.
 That were all covered o'er with the early wild rose,
 Where the antlered bucks led the timid does,
 And where often they battled for glory.

XII.

'These beautiful lands were the red man's home,
 And over them they had loved dearly to roam;
 It was there that old Waukesha long did dwell,
 And some of you knew the old chieftain well,
 For his village was there when you came.
 The pool of Bethesda, he knew well the place,
 For in it he saw the Manitou's face,
 This spring with its scriptural name.

XLII.

Oh! grand indeed were these prairies so green,
 And no land that excelled them had ever been seen,
 And swift as the settlements over them spread,
 Westward more swiftly the red man fled,
 Towards the far setting sun.
 The white man's step was now at his door,
 He had sold these lands, they were his no more.
 And the end of his lease had come.

XLIII.

'Then did the emigrants, fast as they came,
 Seek out these fair lands and make each his claim,
 And soon the whole country was dotted with farms,
 From which when the drum gave the call *to arms!*

Sprang so many brave boys in blue.
 Who went to the front to protect the old flag,
 And pull down that ill-looking, cross-barred rag,
 That was set up by Davis' vile crew.

• XLIV.

Our City likewise took a glorious stand,
 In the late cruel war that darkened our land,
 Her sons, too, marched forth our honor to shield,
 Determined to treason they never would yield,
 But in liberty's cause would they fight.
 And before their firm ranks by good Abraham led,
 The thrice-cursed demon of slavery fled.
 And ended our long dark night.

XLV.

Then was there peace once more in the land,
 And back to their homes came the wreck of our bands
 That went forth in the hour of their country's great need,
 And performed such worthy and glorious deeds,
 For Columbia's fair happy land.
 Back to their farms and workshops they went,
 And are helping to pay up the money we spent,
 With a willing and diligent hand.

XLVI.

But now forty years have come and gone,
 In the ceaseless round of night and morn,
 Of weeks and months that made these years,
 So swiftly flown midst joys and fears,
 And seeking worldly treasure.
 While some obtained the wealth they sought,
 With others all has come to naught.
 While chasing after pleasure.

XLVII.

And now this City that's grown so quick,
 This City so famous, this City of brick,
 Has church towers pointing to the skies,
 Court House of elephantine size,
 This great brown stone pavilion.
 So large without, within so small,

That's made the people "heave and pawl,"
And cost them half a million.

XLVIII.

But the thing in which we take most pride,
Are our free public schools found far and wide :
Those fountains from which all our liberties flow,
The bulwarks of freedom wherever they go,
And the rock upon which she stands.
Cursed be the hand that would them destroy.
These temples of learning, our pride and our joy,
The head-lights in this free land.

XLIX.

Our Water-Works also, extensive and grand,
In the starting of which I had a small hand,
That's cost so much money and labor to build,
With a reservoir up on the Sixth Ward hill,
Which looks the City all o'er.
It's supposed that the people this water will use,
But they can, as no doubt many will do, refuse,
And drink lager beer as before.

L.

There is one thing more that is giving us fame,
Our new medical spring, Siloam its name,
That the Kane brothers found hid in a ravine.
The most wonderful physick that ever was seen,
Will cure you all up in a minute.
This new found prize is a fountain of wealth,
Makes the Kane brothers rich, and gives you good health.
So there surely must be something in it.

L.I.

But these *forty years* that are past and gone,
How old father Time has hurried them on.
Once we were young, and how quick could we see,
But now are our heads like the almond tree,
And our sight is beginning to fail.
How short seems the time when we look it all o'er.
From now back to the year Eighteen Thirty-Four,
The time when the first of you came.

LII.

And now, as so much for the living I've said,
 I will speak in this verse of our much-honored dead,
 Who dwelt with us through all these first early years,
 Shared all of our joys as well as our fears,

And whose labors on earth are all o'er.
 Who have gone to a land that is glorious and bright,
 Where the day is eternal and there comes no night,
 On eternity's evergreen shore.

LIII.

Juneau, Kilbourn, Walker and West,
 With Wilcox and Ely have gone to their rest,
 James H. Rogers, Dewey and Page,
 With Hawley and Byron, near the same age,
 Have passed from this earth away.
 Cramer, Pomeroy and Blossom are gone,
 And have opened their eyes on eternity's morn,
 In the realms of endless day.

LIV.

It's but five short years since this club was formed,
 And see what a number have already gone;
 In the next five years we expect to lose more.
 For some of you now have reached fourscore,
 And more than half of us three.
 From this time on we shall go very fast,
 Yes! fall like the leaves when the wintry blast
 Sweeps over the snow-covered trees.

LV.

Yes, the rest of our life here will be very short,
 And soon they will say of us "*ils sont mort*,"*
 Then a badge of black crape will be put on our door,
 And the places that knew us will know us no more,
 In this world we have all so much loved.
 Our spirits will fly to the bright realms of light,
 Where the badge on the door will always be white,
 In that Heavenly Mansion above.

* They are dead.

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